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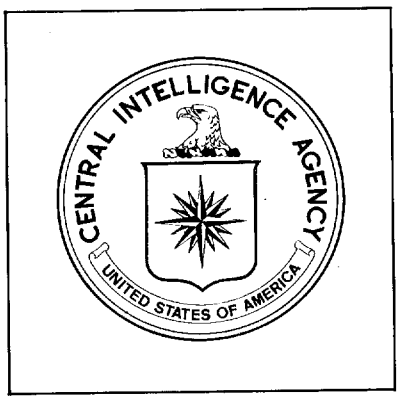

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STAFF NOTES:

Latin American Trends

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LATIN AMERICAN TRENDS

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Western Hemisphere Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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Argentina: Resurgence of Left-Wing Terrorism

Following a period of reduced activity, the extremist People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) appears prepared to raise its profile.

The ERP last week threatened to conduct a campaign of "indiscriminate execution" against government officials and Peronist leaders if police authorities did not show publicly that 19 captured guerrillas were still active. The 72-hour deadline set by the ERP ultimatum passed without full government compliance, and a major terrorist action could be attempted to make good on the threat. Although the ERP has been weakened by the government's counter-insurgency drive, it still has the force to carry out random acts of terrorism.

The summer lull was shattered by a new round of killings last week and security forces are braced for another onslaught soon. A high-ranking Labor Ministry official and his bodyguard were slain in Buenos Aires following a series of assassinations that claimed the lives of several policemen and businessmen during the month. The January edition of the clandestine ERP mouthpiece El Combatiente declared that a campaign of retaliation was being launched in retribution for each "companero" killed by security forces. Government officials, military men, police, and businessmen were designated as targets. Actually, these have been the usual ERP victims for some time.

Meanwhile, federal police continue to have success in some aspects of their war on terrorism. They dealt a strong blow recently when they raided a printing plant and several propaganda dissemination sites used by the terrorists. 3.3(b)(1)

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[redacted] the police believe that the printing network was used to produce and distribute all copies of the two principal terrorist publications--Estrella Roja and El Combatiente. If this mechanism has been effectively dismantled, the morale of the ERP could suffer.

Other setbacks have included the arrest of many ERP activists and sympathizers, including some key leaders. In many cases the captures have led to new information that has enabled police to conduct additional raids.

The recent terrorist offensive is probably calculated to show that the ERP is not on the run as the government claims. Moreover, the terrorists may be attempting to take advantage of the uneasy atmosphere created by reports circulating widely in Argentina that presidential adviser Lopez Rega's extraordinary power is generating tensions within the Peronist government. Military, labor,and opposition party distaste for the imperious presidential secretary became the subject of much public speculation shortly after the President moved to her summer retreat and apparently left Lopez Rega to conduct government business.

Should infighting within the Peronist ranks intensify or should Mrs. Peron be faced with a governmental crisis, the terrorists would be encouraged to expand their attacks in hopes of aggravating the situation. [redacted]

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